



The Weber
Shandwick
Collective

Welcome to the first post election edition of Weber Shandwick's monthly political newsletter, where we look at how Starmer is settling in and analyse the impact of key moments from the King's Speech to Party Conferences and the upcoming Holyrood election.

If you're wondering how your organisation can adapt to a brand new government with a different set of policy priorities and stakeholders, get in touch with us [here](#). There's a real opportunity for forward-thinking businesses to get ahead in this "change" moment, and we're experts in creative campaigning and navigating political processes.

THE POLITICAL FORECAST

THE PARLIAMENTARY PULSE

HITTING THE GROUND RUNNING

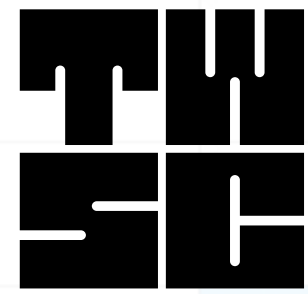
This PA team for one has been kept extremely busy with the new government's flurry of announcements in its first few weeks. From plans to tackle prison overcrowding, planning reform, GB Energy legislation, a fiscal review and the setting up of the National Wealth Fund, Starmer's clearly keen to show that he means business - and his approval ratings suggest that it's working (see below)! With recess now running until September 2nd, it's high time for every politico to have a rest, reset, and reread of everything Labour has thrown at us so far.

DEAR CHANCELLOR, I'M AFRAID THERE IS NO MONEY

One of the most significant events since the election was the Chancellor's publication of the Treasury's analysis of the state of the nation's finances. In it, she claimed the Conservatives left a £22 billion black hole in the public finances which they hid from both Labour and UK citizens. This provoked a furious denial from the former Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, who pointed out that it was Labour's decision to award above inflation public sector pay rises and a 22% rise for junior doctors to end the industrial action, coming in at roughly £9.4bn. The accusations will continue, but one thing now seems inevitable - tax rises in the Autumn.

CAP-TIVATING RUTHLESSNESS

In a firm display of early authority, Starmer suspended seven MPs, including former shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, for six months after they voted against the Government's stance on scrapping the two-child benefit cap. The rebellious MPs, mostly aligned with Jeremy Corbyn, supported an SNP motion to end the cap, which limits benefits to families with more than two children. Despite their efforts, the amendment was decisively defeated, with the new Labour Government showing little willingness to reverse its position considering the fiscal situation.



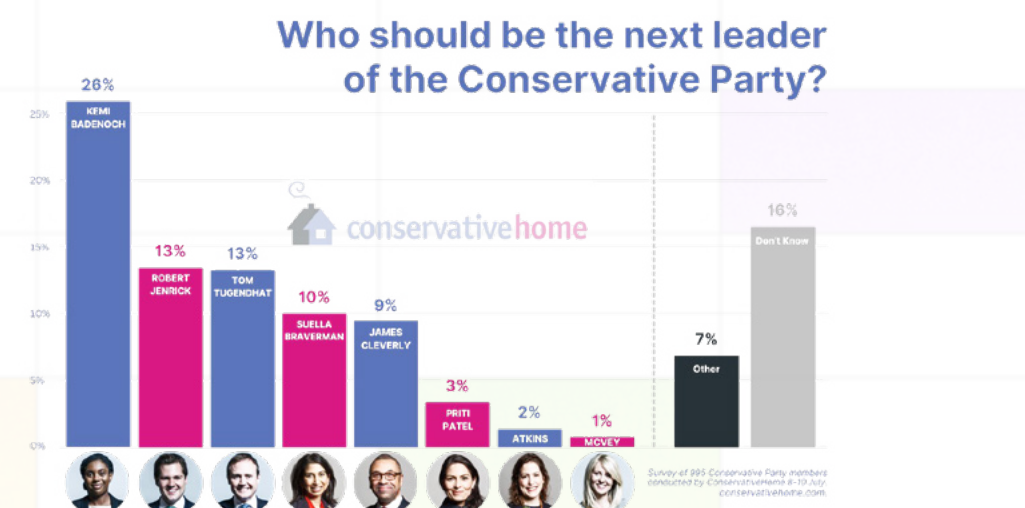
POLITICS IN NUMBERS

	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know	Net approval	Change from final pre-election poll
Keir Starmer, Prime Minister	38%	20%	13%	+19%	+20%
Rishi Sunak, Conservative Party Leader	20%	42%	13%	-22%	+16%
Ed Davey, Liberal Democrats Leader	25%	18%	24%	+8%	+10%

The honeymoon period may not be guaranteed to last long for Sir Keir Starmer, but just weeks after polling day, voters' approval rating of the PM has surged to +19%, up from -1% net approval in the final pre-election poll. Rishi Sunak's net approval rating sits at -22%, an improvement of 16 points on the last pre-election poll, where he sat on a dismal -38% net approval (not that he will be too concerned, he's due to pack it in soon).

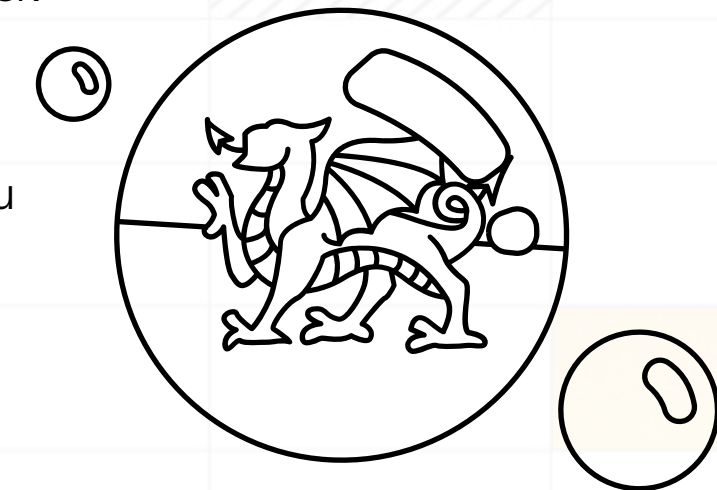
ELECTION AFTER ELECTION

The jockeying to fill Sunak's position as Tory Party leader began almost the second the election was called, and it is shaping up to be an interesting race! The below poll was taken two weeks prior to the close of nominations (a significant caveat) but it looks like it will be the "Stop Kemi" contest. The Shadow Housing Secretary is the odds-on favorite amongst the party faithful. But she faces a battle to win the right of the party, with Robert Jenrick and Priti Patel hot on her heels...



BEYOND THE BUBBLE

It's been all change at the top of Welsh Labour too since our last update. After Vaughan Gething's resignation as First Minister and Welsh Labour Leader following a string of controversies, Eluned Morgan was elected unopposed as the new Leader of the Welsh Labour Party. She will now face a vote in the Senedd on 6 August, where a new First Minister will be nominated (in theory, the opposition could prevent this by getting behind one single candidate - but it's almost certain that they won't). Having previously described her Health Secretary role as a "very, very tough job", she'll now be inheriting the difficult task of unifying Welsh Labour, governing and leading the party through the elections next year. With a **poll** placing pro-independence party Plaid Cymru just one point behind Labour, it doesn't look like things are going to get easier anytime soon...



MAKING A SPLASH

It did not take long for the Parliamentary Standards Commissioner to come out swinging in the new parliament, with one MP on the chopping block. Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Tulip Siddiq MP, is being investigated by the watchdog over claims that she failed to register rental income on a London property for over a year. Labour released a statement, blaming the incident on an "administrative oversight" and stating that Siddiq had apologised. Regardless, being labelled by the BBC as "the first MP of the new Parliament to be placed under investigation by the Standards Commissioner" is not a title any MP wants to claim...



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QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“Animals, children, an election and a film crew. This everyday story of Somerset folk is fun to film, but may be a bit more Fawlty Towers than Downton Abbey.”

- **Sir Jacob Rees-Mogg**. ICYMI, JRM will soon star in a fly-on-the-wall documentary called “Meet the Rees-Moggs”, airing later this year on Discovery+. Cameras will follow him, his wife, three of their children and the family nanny Veronica - who also looked after Sir Jacob as a child - in what many are calling Westminster’s answer to the Kardashians. Popcorn (or perhaps a suitably upmarket snack) at the ready.



BUSINESS BULLETIN

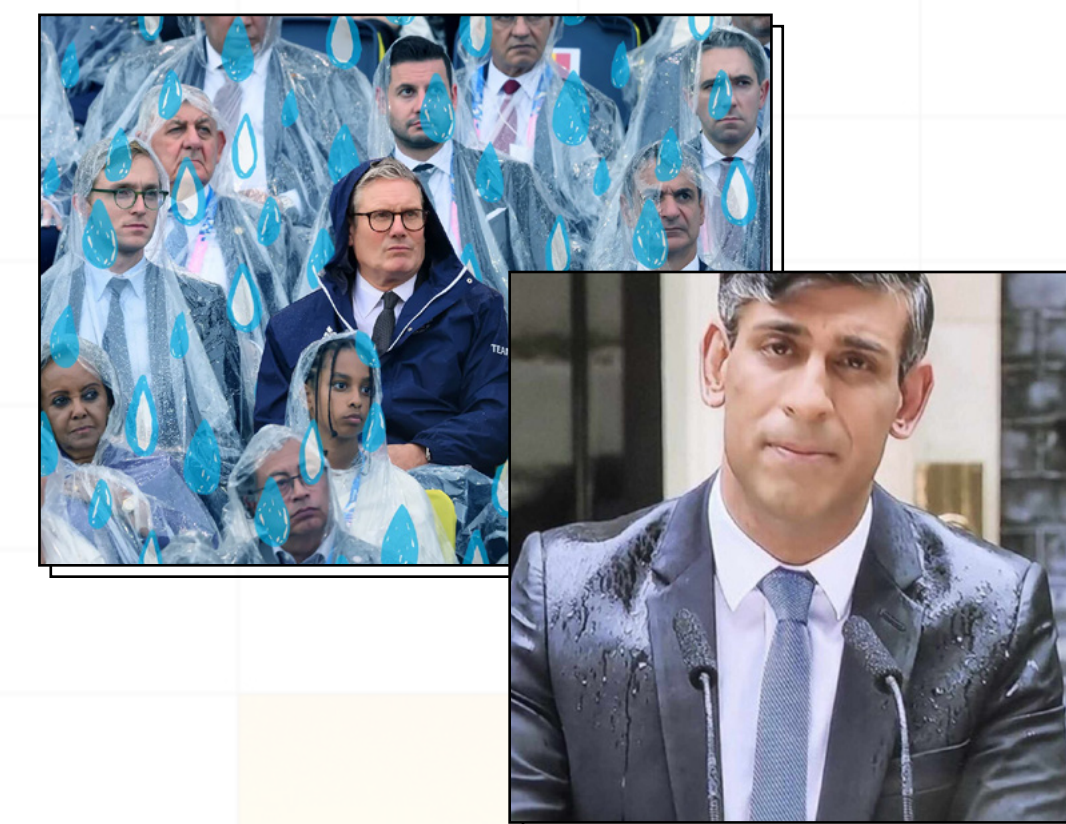
Healthcare, transport, small businesses, big businesses - there weren't many sectors unaffected by the Global IT outage which struck in July, with mass “blue screen” panic following an anti-virus update that sent systems and devices into meltdown. The level of disruption highlighted the importance of businesses planning for a crisis, but at a national level raised serious questions about cybersecurity and the UK’s digital preparedness. Government in the aftermath was keen to say that a review with partners and the National Cyber Security Centre was underway and that lessons would be learned!

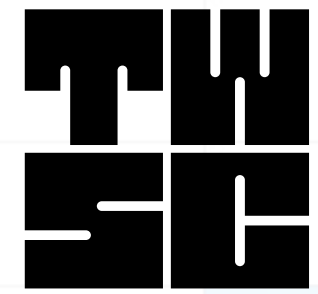


VIRAL VIEW

DADCORE IN THE DOWNPOUR

PM Starmer ignited an outpouring of British pride with his sartorial choice for the Olympics Opening Ceremony. True to his meticulous, ever-prepared - and just a little bit boring - reputation, he brought along his own Team GB Adidas cagoule to withstand the torrential rain in Paris. As he stood out against a backdrop of poncho-clad dignitaries, we couldn't help but think how Rishi could have benefitted from some lessons from the man who defeated him...





BEHIND THE BILL: GB Energy

This week, the Labour Government introduced the much-anticipated GB Energy Bill in Parliament, marking a significant stride towards transforming the UK into a “clean energy superpower.” The Bill – very much Ed Miliband’s pet project – lays the groundwork for the establishment of a publicly owned energy company headquartered in Scotland (rumoured to be in Aberdeen, however the exact location is *still* tbc).

Central to the strategy is a new partnership with the Crown Estate, which will see the creation of a dedicated division to develop offshore wind farms. Bolstered by proposals allowing the Crown Estate to borrow funds for investment, projections for this new model indicate that up to 20-30 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity could be developed by 2030. That’s enough to power nearly 20 million homes.

While it’s certainly a flagship commitment to a greener UK, there are still plenty of questions around GB Energy’s finer details... including a lack of operational guidelines, vague funding mechanisms and regulatory frameworks, and minimal provisions for local community benefits (despite Starmer’s pro-YIMBY push). The initial GB Energy investment aims to catalyse £60bn in private sector investment; can that really be achieved without clarification on these points? And how will the relationship between Starmer and Miliband – famously not always smooth – play out when this level of ambition is involved?

The Conservatives also had plenty to say on the plans; Douglas Lumsden, the Scottish Conservative Party’s Spokesperson on Energy, Net Zero, and Transport went as far as accusing Labour of “*abandoning*” Scotland and its energy workforce – noting Miliband’s plans to accelerate a block on new North Sea oil and gas licences.

So what next? Although the precise timescale is unconfirmed, the GB Energy Bill is set to have its Second Reading on September 5th. It will then move to the Report Stage and Third Reading towards the end of the year. The House of Lords will review it from January 2025, with estimated Royal Assent from May next year. Only time will tell if the Bill’s passage – and the Bill itself – is energy efficient...



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